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Proposed Oshkosh city tax levy up 4 percent, mil rate down 1.5 percent for 2019

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Oshkosh City Hall Oshkosh Northwestern Media File Photo

OSHKOSH - The tax levy is going up. The tax rate is going down. Public safety union negotiations are done (they got dental).

These are just a few things in the 2019 Oshkosh preliminary budget. But what do they mean for the average citizen? What should you, as a taxpayer, be aware of?

Two basic things: the total proposed budget for 2019 is \$75.2 million, or an increase of 2.5 percent from 2018, and no positions will be eliminated.

What's it going to cost me?

The proposed tax levy for the 2019 budget is up by 3.9 percent from last year, coming in at a total of \$39.3 million.

The tax rate, however, would decrease 1.5 percent to \$10.40 for each \$1,000 of assessed value. In other words, the owner of a property worth \$100,000 would pay \$1,040 in city property taxes or \$15.40 more than in 2018.

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Author's note

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What's driving the change?

Property values increased due to the closing of the Southwest Industrial Park's tax incremental financing district. The park was a local economic powerhouse that funneled money to other, lower-performing TIF districts in the city.

That bump in property value was offset by the state Department of Revenue decreasing the value of both personal and real property. Documents also blamed the "erosion" of Oshkosh's commercial tax base as a result of court decisions that upheld the so-called dark store loophole that allows retailers to assess their stores as empty buildings.

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Who are the winners and losers?

Public safety, debt service and public works are three of the areas that are contributing to the city's spending increase, with a total additional expense of \$1.35 million.

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Other programs, like the library, museum and GO Transit, would get higher levy support. The Parks and Community Development departments, Oshkosh Image campaign and some insurance programs would see increases as well.

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While other revenues (anything other than property taxes), would increase by 1.05 percent to \$35.9 million, intergovernmental revenues are only increasing by 0.85 percent, part of what the documents call a "disturbing" trend of reductions. General transport aids from the state are also decreasing, as is ambulance revenue, which the city blames on uninsured clientele and a Medicare reimbursement freeze.

Where can I find a copy of the budget?

The 2019 preliminary budget is available for inspection and download on the city's website, www.ci.oshkosh.wi.us/Government/Budget.

Want to weigh in?

The Oshkosh Common Council will hold budget workshops Oct. 29 and 30 and Nov. 7. The final approval is scheduled for Nov. 14.

When am I going to get the bill?

After the council approves the final budget, city staff will send out tax bills, which are due Jan. 31. If property owners can't pay the full amount, they must pay a quarter of the amount by Jan. 31 with additional payments due March 31, May 31 and July 31.



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